



A SECOND BOOK OF VERSE
REFLECTIONS
Siddhartha Gigoo
A WRITERS WORKSHOP REDBIRD BOOK



REFLECTIONS
Siddhartha Gigoo

<i>Babybird</i>	children's books
<i>Blackbird</i>	serious comics
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REFLECTIONS

Siddhartha

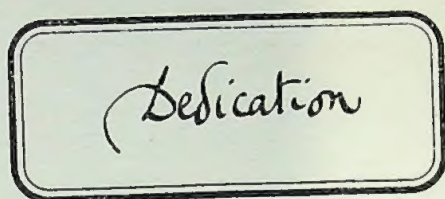
Gigoo



A
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Publication

The Author

Siddhartha Gigoo was born at Srinagar in Kashmir on March 20, 1974. At present, he is studying in B.A. Part II at Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir State. This is his second book of verse, the first being *Fall and Other Poems* brought out by WRITERS WORKSHOP in 1994. He is a columnist for two English dailies published from Jammu. Besides, he writes short stories and plays upon the flute.



for
BHAWANA

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STRANGERS

You and I,
strangers
amid strange faces,
swerve
from one beginning
to another.
The undulating flames of life
warn us.

So
untie the knots,
let the Self wander
and cling no more
to the ropes of patience.
Time is the wealth
that Brahma squanders.

One,
two,
and three
— the paces of life —
are not eternal.

Not even
Tat Tvam Asi
can unite us.
You and I
are still strangers.

DREAM

The walls of separation
fall,
announce
messages sublime.
We,
neither known
nor unknown,
crumple ourselves
into an agony;
leave the storm of life
unabated;
pick up inane words from the sanctuary
to construct new lines
meaningless;
waver
and gyrate
amid throes of death;
move from nothingness
to nothingness,
and finally linger
like dry leaves
upon a dry willow.

THE WOMB

Inside the womb . . .

raw flesh, raw bones;
infant blood flowing
in narrow veins;
blind visions;
no words, no dreams;
no spaces;
the feel of existence,
breath
and singleness.

Outside the womb . . .

an escape from youth;
a deformity;
an autumn sunset
floating in the beverage;
a mosquito
brooding on the blade
of a ceiling fan;
a dancing moth
circling the filament
and searching a desolate destination;
the death of a cancerous tobacconist

And here am I
in the womb,
unborn
awaiting rebirth.

THE SUN

12 o'clock.

Noon.

Summer.

I look at the sun.

Hard for me.

The face
and the cracks
— the partition —
death!

It comes out
and
goes in,
that "something in me".
What?
a conflict!
a paradox!

Romance —
But it is fire
all around.
Hot sand.
Uncertainty!

At last
a curse
a mischief
and the round sun.

BURIAL

With my own hands
I
bury her
under the autumn-dust
and
watch the wind blow dry leaves
over
her cold flesh.

She no more breathes,
no more gifts a kiss,
no more smells of roses,
but
I see her
weeping alone
on a distant cloud.

I see no people
no civilisations
no shadows
no gods or goddesses
but only a face
and blue eyes
bluer than the cosmic scene
until
I perish
and embrace the soft bones
of my blue-eyed daughter.

DELIVERANCE

Life stinks of coal-tar
when it is time
to cast off the aged skin
and smear the forehead
with holy ash.

Impermanence prevails
until
all youth,
spent recklessly over time-bound
hallucinations and mirages,
is ancient phenomenon.

The Gun-man awaits me
at the barricade.
Therefore,
sin,
annihilate
and conquer.
Holiness is no deliverance.

NIGHTMARES

Sleep slowly maturing into fullness
mingles with nightmares
of short duration.

I see
a pack of angry humans
wild,
hungry
and bloodthirsty
waiting under hanging infant bodies
slaughtered.

A mouthful of words
disables a shriek
a yell
a loud cry
that could burst my sleep.

I see
numbers, figures, a question-mark
and the jumbled letters
of a familiar word
and then suddenly
the ruins of a temple,
stones falling from space
into a chasm,
a wounded smile playing
upon the wounded edge
of the knife.

I hear
an echo playing hide and seek
with sound unheard.

I feel
a conscious struggle
awakened
to overcome dumbness.
Then
a quiver,
a rupture;
a lacerated spell ends,
and in the course of the sequence
I yearn for a dream
at dawn.

SUPRA-CONSCIOUSNESS

The door opens,
the veil is lifted,
the beats of a drum
fall,
one by one,
upon the airy surface
of consciousness
and solidify
slowly
into silence and no-time
to be heard
beyond
in supra-consciousness.

The journey
through nothingness
is not the end
nor the beginning.
It lasts an eternity.

I—
the Dot,
the Universe,
the Origin.

SHAME

Words

looked at me,
encaged me,
laughed at me,
threw debts at my face,
pecked at my noble heart,
wove webs of bondage
and danced a deathly dance.

Words

mastered my spirits,
drove my passion,
held the reins of my reason,
robbed me of my self,
gambled with me
a deceitful gamble
and put me at stake.

Stoically

I watched the words
tear to pieces the robes of my honour
and in nakedness
reward me
with everlasting shame
and disgrace
for
theft,
fraud
and treason.

THE RENEGADES

Towards the end of the day
we,
the outcastes,
intellectual renegades,
useless breathing corpses
measure
and weigh
the empty spaces within our hearts.
We
select apt words,
use them,
let them wander to exhale verses
and free them.

The evening prayers rend the skies.
We
hear collisions—
truth, falsehood and deceit.
A barrenness resounds.
Renunciation.

We
desirous of the unprotected word
—Love—
think
dream
and subside
pityingly.

We
silently hum a familiar tune
of an unfamiliar song
and retreat homewards
awaiting
a new morning.

DEJECTION

The sun is harsh on me;
every moment long,
difficult
and hard.

Music met with a new beginning
when

I broke the strings of my violin
and hung it on the wall.

Words were no longer a passion
when

I burnt the pages of my poetry
and felt secure in the evening rosary.

Fear and docility got crushed
under my feet
when

I stepped into the slaughter-house
out of dejection
and left smiling

with a desire to be one of those encaged
who wait for the last cold embrace
of Death
but not to be slaughtered.

THE SMILE

A smile clings to a smile
and inscribes
on the crust of her lips
signs
of old age.

That broken rainbow-like smile
enchains the living
but not the dead
for whom
there is no fire
inside the burning chambers
of the morgue.

The smile shall soon become
a vegetable
for the ravens;
so
destroy that smile;
let it rot and decay
before it performs a miracle;
raze it to a shambles;
dig nails into the scab
that leaves a blotch
on the face
and slaughter the smile
that makes
and unmakes
a prostitute.

EXISTENCE

Waiting is pain
which digs
the floor of transcendence.

Digging and digging
create emptiness.

A hollow cell bursts
and a tremor pervades
the inside
of the shell.

At last
the churning spills venom
upon the treasure
of patience.

The flame extinguishes.
The part merges into the whole.
In the tug of war
the rope finally breaks.

What follows?

A blast
and then the emergence
of Non-Self
out of
I.

SEASON

What bells peal inside?
The suburbs of summer
sprawling out into my soul
suckling on peace and solitude
cripple my concentration.

A season of youth and fire
is over;
the sacred syllable is lost
in the quietude:
warm ashes of heat
stick to my forehead
and mix with the rivulet
of perspiration.

Life remains undestroyed.

The corpse that I carry
on my shoulder
squeals
at the breath of winter.

If Siva won't dance
his brave dance of death
I shall pine for love
once more
in the outskirts of some ancient season.

IMAGINE

Imagine
we are strangers,
we see
each other
in cold winter.
Imagine
our meeting
at twilight.
Imagine
a colourless universe.

Imagine
there is no nature
around.

You smile
gently
and lisp a word
unheard.

Imagine
your breath floats
into mine.

Imagine
the beginning
of new togetherness.

Imagine
ages in that moment
short-lived.

And imagine
the everlasting embrace
in love.

BELONGINGS

The words she utters,
the dreams she sees,
the things she touches
are not mine.

The tongue she speaks
is strange,
unknown,
mysterious.

The land she rests her feet on
does not belong to me.
But the shadows that fall here
are ours.

NEW ROOTS

19 January 1990,
the colour of fright,
an unvoiced decree
and the last metamorphosis.

Afar—
a sunset on the stairs,
blood dripping on the saffron-bud,
fear,
shrieks,
the deafening curfew
a gaping wound on the forehead
and paralysis of the shadow.

Exile shakes the pillars of conscience,
a caravan of days is lost.
We have no seasons,
no walls to hang pictures
of ancestors.

History weeps through the eyes of the old,
and children,
housed under canvas,
play mute.

A snake-bite
a sun-stroke
an accident
and then the curtain.

A civilisation dangles between
the horoscope and the computer;
the young see visions
even at the crematorium.

Reflections

Dreams of settlement flow.
A new strangeness
a new land
and the nomads discover
some new roots.

OLD AGE

Frozen memories melt
slowly
and reflect some images
of tears and laughter.

Some unwritten words
seek the corners
of her lips.

The wasted youth
seeks the throne
of her palm.

Don't cultivate nettles
on the raw wounds
of old age.

Feed my infirmity
to the fishes
and
I dance naked
with the young daughters
of the merry fishermen.

BLASPHEMY

The aftermath of a confession
comes out
of an egg-shell—
lame,
breathless,
tired—
and cuts through the glass
of belief.

Nothing shall emerge
from the three entities—
thought, word and music—
until
the hand plucks the lotus
from the mire.

They all say
plucking the lotus
from the mire
is a blasphemy.

ORPHIANS

Faces, poetic faces.

What religions

what faiths

what beliefs

what narrow views and sentiments

and what injuries inflicted upon their innocence
are known to them?

I just remember

faces,

dead souls of a dead womb

and the customers of pain

and apathy.

With no mothers, no fathers

no families to talk to,

no imperishable agreements

or disagreements,

no lullabies for their infancy

no delicacies for their youth

they are

guilty of their own guiltlessness

and I

a sinner,

cursing irony and fate,

return relaxed

to my home

in search of a listener

for my new verse.

DESERTION

Imperfect beginnings steal innocence
from a lover
blinded by the arrow.

Loneliness,
melancholy
and craving
hasten to excavate
the realms of the unknown.

Hangman's noose is a mockery
and knots a joke
when the beginning of an occupation
—death—
throws open the vacant goals
to sprout
termination and freedom.

Wretched divinity draws
a circle of silence
and I advance
towards the limits
where
the fragments of the Being
revolve
and rotate.

The rewards are distributed
somewhere else.
So let the child
in the garden
pick up the catapult
and run.

SIN

Religion reeks a foul smell
of sacrifice,
penance,
awakening
and bliss.

Religion speaks of karma to the idlers,
faith to the outsiders,
wisdom to the ignorant
truth to the untruthful,
and glory to the seekers of the Self.

Religion leads us
towards sublimity
in darkness.

A lunatic lifts the lid
from the abyss of religion
and finds
the origin is sin.

Epilogue:
Hurl stones at the sinner
for salvation.

POETRY AND MUSIC

From preparedness to unpreparedness,
from completeness to incompleteness,
from union to separation,
from certainty to uncertainty,
from belief to disbelief
and then

I

flowing from the outerself
into the innerself.

Telling the beads in some corner
is no ecstasy.

Therefore,

let the soul wander
and bleed

till

poetry and music
merge.

MEDITATION

The dream splits
to throw on the sense
numberless scenes
and recollections.

The beauty I chose once
reddened,
faded,
dried
in yet another accomplishment.

Long ago

I placed a mirror
in front of a mirror
and the end was seen
nowhere.

The distances, short and long,
were always
short and long.

So why fret about parting
and no-return.

For me
the umbra and penumbra
lie separated
while in union;
the Black Hole has a vent
and no more swathes
the forces,
and the fire starts to cool
in an unknown season
of silence
and meditation.

Reflections

PEACE

Music shut the windows of my return
to delight and sadness
a long time ago
before the ripening of fruits
in love's orchard
when a lizard stole the serenity
from a distant observer
grown quiet
at the edges of boredom
and sloth.

The beginning crawls to touch
an end.

I shall not sing to the girl,
deaf and dumb
with no tear-drops
inbetween her eyelids
and no dreams
of dancing and trembling
like a fish.

I shall not say
that I am dead here
but alive there
amid her whispers
and silences
when lives gird on to lives,
days pile upon days,
undying hours multiply
to watch
Love's naked body,
decked with roses unreal,
wither

in sombre resplendence.

I shall not rain
upon the pavement
on which she sat once
and grew old
unable to conjure up images
of wild immortality
while all alone.

I shall not live to be vanquished
by the jingle of her anklets,
the fragrance of her breath
and the voice of her footsteps.

The cage of temptation breaks,
puts forth an order,
oneness,
unity
together in camouflage
to spread
birthlessness and deathlessness.

An invocation of the final word:
PEACE.

DAMNATION

Midnight,
a skyscraper,
busiest apartment,
hundredth storey.

I look from the window
—a million lights,
eleven-lane roads,
flyovers,
cars moving at 100 miles per hour
no flower-pots
no green leaves
no shallow waters
no time to think
“how lonely I am!”

“Look into the dust-bin
for some sadness” speaks the mirror,

No empty buses
wait
for the passengers
in the city
where
morality is a bane.

Men sing no more
of the warm breasts of women
but seek refuge
in the desert storms
and behold
the formation of new sand-dunes.

The old ones vanish
with the winds
into silence
and nothingness.

This is no land for poets.
Artists are crucified,
the lutes of shepherds broken,
lovers excommunicated,
tried,
afterwards electrocuted.

Savages feed the nations,
wars give birth to boundaries,
countries to mimic governments,
art is auctioned.

The visitors to museums
are extinct.

The State is the Politician . . .

This is the country
for the benefited
where
the unemployed learn
to relinquish
and reconcile.

FINGERS

Fingers shape the thumped clay
and carve
the relics of our civilisation—
tribal earthenware
destined to slavery
in the museums.

Fingers play upon the flute
and drop the bomb
to turn the blood of children
into acid.

Fingers hold the magic lamp
to win the crown
for the king.

Fingers offer the temptation
to conquer land.

Fingers peel history
and watch
the rope, the guillotine and the signature.

Fingers ease the labour-pain
and dig the earth
to bury the infant.

Fingers still adorn the garland
of a cannibal
and worship the dead.

The fingers are
the coronation,
the razor's edge
and the final sentence.

IDENTIFICATION-MARK

Ice melts;
the Siberian cranes tremble,
perspire
and fly towards the Sahara.

The black God sends his Bull
to free us.
So let us take the Ration Cards along
and leave the credentials
for the thirsty flames.

I too stand in the queue
for identification.

MIRROR

The dark look penetrates the night;
the lips watch the eyes smile;
the nails scratch the ceiling;
the wound gapes at the pink bosom
and the folds of the sari
unfold.

Even the mirror isn't a mirror.

Memories settle upon the ash-tray;
tears wet the woollen rug;
the black hair turns white;
the song touches the finger-tips
and the cold face rests
on the warm lap

Even the mirror isn't a mirror.

A look,
a word,
a gesture.

The mirror is no more a mirror.

ANNUNCIATION

Memories crawl out of the night's womb
to erode the passion
for life.

The pines,
the mist,
the night,
the unseen illustrations of nature
hidden,
resound: Loneliness.

Nature forgets to perform
its task
as the dusky blackness carves
uncanny shapes in the dark.
Some desires get pruned,
some dreams turn stony.
Here surrounds the spirit,
the myth,
born of a desire to carve
holy figures
out of silent musings.

I encounter
a queer mystery,
an annunciation:
"All things born for me
wither
in the arms of nature."

EVACUATION

Evacuation awakens in me
a dawn of oblivion.
All past is dissolved.
Time creeps up,
moment by moment,
upon the hazy surroundings
and erupts
into a wild laughter,
a drunken fit.

Evacuation renders me
soul-less.
All visions fade.
A petrified shadow
leans
against an alien well
and waits.

Evacuation lashes me
into a pause,
a punishment
and a sacrifice.
The past,
the present
and the future
shrink into a unity
and fly
leaving behind
a time-less persistence of Being.
Evacuation leaves me breathless
but the moon still shines
in my breast.

Burn the music of mourning
or else
meditate.

DARK BLOTS

Words for the dumb;
songs for the deaf;
visions for the blind;
freedom for the slaves
and slavery for the free.

I see some dark blots
on the pages
of History.

Legends and myths for the ignorant;
ignorance for the learned;
victory for the vanquished;
defeat for the victorious
and sanity for the insane.

The dark blots shadow
crucifixion
of the noble.

COMPANIONS

Not the objects of Nature,
not the moon,
the sun
and the stars
are my companions.

My companions are
the objects that you touch,
the songs that you sing,
the words that you kiss,
the days that you live
and the moments
that are yours
and mine.

SUICIDE

Life chases me through the streets
of my love
like a mad butcher
while death feeds a sparrow
at her doorstep.

Life chases me through the night's wilderness
while freedom seeks a bird
in a cage.

I run,
hide,
swoon
and life carries me back
from her shadow
to coarser pavements,
whitewashed loneliness
and dark pain.

One last puff and then home.

ASHES

One by one they all join hands
in a queue
for cremation and burial.
The messengers of death
make merry;
the wild fire sucks the blood;
the survivor sets up
pyre upon pyre,
tomb upon tomb
and the unidentified float quietly
in the river of the dead.
The sons of Time distribute
the goods slowly —
riots for the poor,
prostitution for the rich
and bones for the scavenger.

Let us rejoice for the dead
and grieve for the living
as we go
from ashes to ashes.

Listening to the music of love
I prepare
for the hangover,
the last breath
and my turn to be cremated.

IMAGES

Years pass.
Stones lift their veils
and speak to me
of dreams, memories
and fantasies;
wipe off slush
from their foreheads,
articulate in soft whispers
the secret desires
for adorning her pathways.

The warm waters silence the waves
feel empty within,
blush,
freeze to hear
the sound of her bangles
the rustle of her sari
and stealthily,
as if unnoticed,
extend colourless water-drops
to float across
and take away the henna
of her feet.

My hollow words sink deep
into their own depths
and fight to be the last
that comes from her lips.

NOSTALGIA

At the edge of the world
a civilisation
mesmerised by some outcry
constructs houses
out of wet sand,
stands blabbed at destiny
and weeps.

The nostalgia is the termite
that eats up
the pillars of old age.

The dead depart with the drums,
the new-born learn to chase lizards
and the living read
newspapers.

The old crave to eat the tamarind
of the saffron-land.
Here the night has learnt
to enunciate
softly into their ears
lullabies
of a new land
and lull them to a peaceful sleep.

APATHY

There are moments when
much happens in the world
unnoticed,
unseen,
unfelt;
when

I can't see the beautiful
and the fragile,
the lovely and the dreamy,
when

I hear the whispers of extermination,
the voices of naked children,
the sobs of widows,
when

no one weeps over alien corpses,
the dying men of a dying area,
the crippled
sighing in the shade of excommunication,
when

I feel the nearness of an end
the beginnings of a beginning
the birth of a New Child—
savage
but noble,
ignorant
but true.

YOUTH

Youth is sitting idle,
being sad,
listening to afternoon ragas,
cracking groundnuts on the terrace,
emptying cups of tea,
breathing,
whimpering,
sighing
at love and failure.

Youth is when life's memorable utterances
turn meaningless
and are unlearned
when
poetry is freed from the cage
and fed
to the farmers in the fields,
the fishermen in the seas,
when
we banish words and reason
out of dissatisfaction
and submerge into nausea
and boredom.

Yet I watch the flowers of defeat
fall,
one by one,
at her feet.

KRISHNA

Let me alone tonight;
the decay takes its toll;
the flowers are nowhere
and no tears wash
the stains of loneliness.

The creation was death
for me.

I hear the revelation:
Run away from the cloud
that doesn't rain
and see the twilight
that hides in her hair.

The cows are not grazing.
Come
and dance to the notes
of my flute.

FREEDOM

I am a bird in a cage
dreaming of freedom
and a long flight.
Fetch me the price of freedom.
Fetch me the semblance.

"Freedom is the woman in white
who is walking alone
towards the shore,"
speaks the peacock.

"Freedom is the air outside the bars,"
speaks the wanderer.

But I am a bird in a cage
dreaming of freedom
and a long flight.

SHADOWS

The sun rose high
and there was darkness
once again.

The shadows crouched
on the beds
and slept
under the blankets
to dream.

Men, women, and children
emerged
from the feet of the shadows
and climbed the walls.

The sun sank
and the darkness illuminated
the pathways.

Men, women and children
put the blankets
over themselves
and dreamed of light
shaping itself
into a cone of blackness.

The shadows rows
and toiled
for a living.

CLIPPINGS

Clippings from the youth —
Fits.

I slew the passion.
Instinct, desire and dream
were one.

Life yawned
and death stood naked
with its mouth open.

Inaction caused boredom
and
spiritual debauchery.

A stillness,
a movement,
a turbulence
and then
extinction.

AN AUTUMN EVENING

Time has unfolded its wings,
the sea has changed
from jade to crimson
but still
I see a black sunset
and hear
the whimper of a motherless child.

Each stone that I throw
into the stagnant waters
sinks deep
to fathom the depth.
The surface remains unfathomed
and carries unbroken reflections
towards the shores
until
they too sink.

I
erupt into a scream,
dissipate
like smoke
and vanish secretly.

SHADOW IN EXILE

A homeless shadow
in search
of a new home,
a partner
wanders with a feeling
that death is near.

Youth digging its sharp teeth into itself
listening to woes,
to stories of despair
and cries of pain
wanders with a feeling
that death is near.

The face of a shadow
and
the face of youth
look into each other
passionately
and discover a love and craving
for death.

CURFEW AND RAPE

A knock—
the door opens
and
a thud.

A body is unvelled.

The boatman's daughter
gropes for the cord,
lies still,
emaciated
and panting
in the arms
of curfew and rape.

SEE REFUSES TO SING

She refuses to sing
of love and togetherness
while in my arms
with me and no one else.

She refuses to sing.

She knows the exit
of our labyrinth
but dare not say
she knows the way.

She is in my arms
but feels the presence
of someone else—
breath,
laughter
and pulse.

She refuses to sing.

Through the lone window
of the night
she murmurs the syllables
in my arms
with tiredness,
weariness,
fret,
and closes her eyes
to fall asleep.

DEATH

A heart attack
and then
symbols
moving rapidly
in front of eyes—

the palm of Death;
the clothes of the dead;
the shroud;
the journey;
the four final words
and
the flames.

What state is this?

DESTINY

Circles and circles.
It is fine geometry
all over.

A network of lines
leaving,
coming.

Patterns have no beginning,
no end.

Here,
and there.

Inside
and outside.

Finally it is done.


TIME

The leaves of the calendar,
Obscurity,
Time,
Slow death
and immortality.
What wish remains unfulfilled?
Which dream turns solid?
Again an illusion.

One more child is born
to grow
and vanish.

Writers Workshop

Creative Writing

A B C D
E F G H
I J K L
M N O P
Q R S T
U V W X
Y Z 

a b
c d
e f
g h
i j k l
m n o p
q r s t
u v w x
y z

Writers Workshop

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation. Its task is that of defining and substantiating the role by discussion and diffusion of creative writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using countries.

Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045, India, and diffusion done through a series of books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 100-page illustrated checklist of over 3000 books and cassettes is available for Rs 10, in money order or postage stamps.

The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It consists of writers sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre, experimentation without eccentricity.

The WORKSHOP publishes a periodical book-journal, *The New Miscellany*, devoted to creative writing. It is not a house magazine; as a rule it gives preference to experimental work by young and unpublished writers, its two chief criteria for selection being high imaginative awareness and mature technique. Established writers appear in its pages if their work meets those standards. *The New Miscellany* does not carry advertising. Sufficient postage (registered mail) should accompany book manuscripts and magazine submissions if their return is desired.

One can become a Member or an Associate by written application to the Secretary, which requires the support of two members and approval by majority on committee. Members are writers with published work to their credit. To be an Associate requires agreement with the aims and objects of WRITERS WORKSHOP, active interest in creative writing, and a willingness to lend practical assistance to WORKSHOP activities. Subscription to *The New Miscellany* automatically confers Associate membership. Further details are available from the Director, P. Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Calcutta 700045 (Phone: 473-4325 and 473-2683).

Indian Creative Writing in English

